

REMARKS

* Claims 1-16 were pending in this application. By way of this amendment and reply to the Office Action mailed March 21, 2002, claims 1, 2, 11 and 12 have been amended. Therefore, claims 1-16 are presently pending for further consideration on the merits.

* The specification has been editorially reviewed and revised to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors. No new matter has been added.

* By way of a separate letter submitted herewith, Applicant proposes to amend Figure 4 of the drawings, in order to correct a minor typographical error found in that figure. No new matter has been added.

* In the Office Action, claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,557,659 to Hyde-Thompson. This rejection, to the extent that it may be applied to the presently pending claims, is traversed for at least the reasons given below.

— The present invention is directed to a system and a method for allowing a user to receive a voice message from a telephone, and to respond to the phone message via an e-mail that also corresponds to the sender of the voice message.

Hyde-Thompson, on the other hand, teaches three methods for creating and sending voice messages. In a first method, a user can send an e-mail message that includes digitized voice of the user, whereby the e-mail message is sent as an attachment to an e-mail address of a particular destination. In a second method, when a call to a particular destination phone number goes unanswered, a voice gateway converts the extension number of the destination phone number to an e-mail address, records and digitizes a message left by the caller, and sends the digitized message to an e-mail address that also corresponds to a user of the particular destination phone number. In a third method, a user calls the voice gateway PC by entering his extension number

and e-mail password to log-on to his mailbox. See column 3, line 54 to column 4, line 25 of Hyde-Thompson.

None of the above methods described by Hyde-Thompson is directed to a system or method for determining an identifier of a sender that has sent a digitized message, and, based on the identifier, to allow a receiver of the digitized message to respond to the sender via an e-mail, whereby the e-mail is sent to an address that corresponds to the sender of the digitized message.

In col. 10, line 63 of Hyde-Thompson (which is cited in the Office Action), a voice gateway PC scans an e-mail directory and builds a table, which can be searched using the voice mailbox or extension number to determine an e-mail identification called e-mail name. This correspondence table is with respect to the receiver's extension number and e-mail address, and is not directed to the sender's extension number and e-mail address. Thus, at least in this regards, this portion of Hyde-Thompson is not pertinent to the claimed invention.

In col. 2, line 46 (which is cited in the Office Action), Hyde-Thompson merely describes a file server on a LAN that is used as a "post office" for mail messages. The file server is used to provide a mapping for destination phone numbers and their respective e-mail addresses, and is not used to provide any mapping for sender phone numbers and their respective e-mail addresses. Thus, at least in this regards, this portion of Hyde-Thompson is not pertinent to the claimed invention.

It is noted that Figure 7 of Hyde-Thompson describes a method for a user to send a message to another user over the phone, whereby a computer system locates the recipient e-mail name from a stored user table in step 703. However, in the method described in Figure 7 of Hyde-Thompson, the sender initiates an action to send a voice message, via an e-mail attachment, to a receiver or destination. This is different from the present invention in which a

recipient receives a voice mail, whereby a sender number of the sender that sent the voice mail is determined and then matched up with an e-mail of the sender, and whereby the recipient can then respond to the voice mail by sending an e-mail to the sender. In Figure 7, based on the voice mailbox of the recipient, as given in step 701, the system determines a corresponding e-mail address of the recipient. In the present invention, on the contrary, a sender number identifier attached to a received voice mail is identified by a Sender Number Identifier 26 shown in Figure 1 of the drawings, for example, whereby the sender number identifier is utilized in a Table 25 to see if a corresponding e-mail address of the sender exists in the system.

Figure 8 of Hyde-Thompson provides a call answering operation scheme, whereby the scheme looks for a caller's name from a user table. However, in Figure 8 of Hyde-Thompson, if a caller is outside of the PBX, then an e-mail message is sent to the recipient of the call, whereby the a default name such as "External" and password are used to signify the originator of the message. Unlike the present invention, the recipient cannot REPLY to such an e-mail, since the default name of the e-mail message is not a true e-mail address.

With respect to col. 13, line 53 and Figure 10 of Hyde-Thompson (which are cited in the Office Action), this portion of Hyde-Thompson describes how to reply to a message during message playback. Steps 1009 and 1010 use message application program interfaces (MAPIs) to send an e-mail to the recipient. However, to determine the sender's information, the caller has to enter a digital mailbox number of the recipient, whereby the recipient is the original sender. See steps 1002 and 1003 and 1004 of Figure 10 of Hyde-Thompson. This is much different from the present invention, whereby a Sender Number Identifier (see element 26 in Figure 1 of the drawings) automatically identifies a sender number attached to a received

voice message. In Hyde-Thompson, on the contrary, user interaction is needed, whereby the user has to provide information as to the recipient of an e-mail to an original sender in a case where the original sender is unknown. Referring back to Figure 8 and to col. 8, lines 9-34 of Hyde-Thompson, only original senders in the same PBX as the original recipient are capable of being identified without user input, whereby in the present invention all incoming voice mails are capable of being identified by way of a Sender Number Identifier.

Similarly, Figure 16 (cited in the Office Action) of Hyde-Thompson describes similar features to those discussed above with respect to Figure 10 of Hyde-Thompson, and thus this portion of Hyde-Thompson is also not pertinent to the present invention.

Lastly, col. 18, line 50 (cited in the Office Action) of Hyde-Thompson in part of its claim 1, whereby this method provides a single directory that contains e-mail addresses and extension numbers, but where the single directory is used to forward a voice message to a called party's extension number and to an e-mail address that also corresponds to a user of the called party extension number. This claim of Hyde-Thompson has nothing at all to do with a recipient (or called party) being able to respond to a call by way of an e-mail of a sender (or calling party).

Thus, all of the presently pending claims are patentable over Hyde-Thompson.

Furthermore, each of the presently pending independent claims 1, 2, 11 and 12 has been amended to recite that the identifier (or the identifying step in the method claims) performs identification of the sender number based on a memory address of the memory in which the digitized voice is stored. Such a feature, as obtained from page 4, lines 21-23 of the specification, is not

disclosed, taught or suggested by Hyde-Thompson. Therefore, the presently pending claims are patentable for this additional reason.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

June 10, 2002
Date

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**Marked-Up Specification:**

The paragraph on page 1, lines 5-8:

The present invention relates to a voice mail apparatus and a method of processing voice mail, which may be usable in exchanging, within a computer network, information by voice [massage] message or document with voice message attachment.

The paragraph on page 3, lines 10-16:

The line interface 24 interconnects the voice mail apparatus 20 and a private branch exchange 30 (see Figure 2). The E-mail transmitter 22 transmits E-mail to [a] an E-mail server 10 (see Figure 2). The memory 23 stores voice mails and the sender number identifier 26 identifies a sender number attached to each received voice mail. The table 25 stores E-mail addresses against sender numbers.

The paragraph on page 5, lines 21-28:

If the interrogation in step 104 results in negative or the interrogation in step 105 results in negative, the control routine proceeds to step 106. This is the case where the table 25 does not contain the sender number A2 of the E-mail address B2 corresponding to the sender number A2. In this case, the voice mail apparatus 20 sends to the telephone set 61 a voice announcement that reply by E-mail is impossible (step 106) before the control routine comes to an end.

The paragraph on page 6, lines 3-7:

The control routine repeats this determination in step 107 unless the memory 23 has stored the operator voice reply message. If, in step 107, it is

determined that the memory 23 has stored the voice reply message, the control routine proceeds to step 108.

The paragraph on page 6, lines 8-12:

In step 108, the voice mail apparatus 20 sends to an E-mail server 10 an E-mail against the E-mail address B2 from a proper E-mail address of the voice mail apparatus 20. Specifically, [The] the E-mail transmitter 22 transmits the E-mail with the voice reply message attachment via the LAN 70 to the E-mail server 10.

Marked-up Claims:

1. (Amended) A voice mail apparatus comprising:
a memory to store received digitized voice from a sender;
an identifier to identify a sender number corresponding to the sender that has sent the digitized voice; and
a table [containing plural] that provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail addresses [against plural senders] and a plurality of sender numbers, respectively,
wherein the identifier performs an identification of the sender number based on a memory address within the memory in which the digitized voice is stored.

2. (Amended) A voice mail apparatus comprising:
a memory to store received digitized voice from a sender;
an identifier to identify a proper sender number of the sender that has sent the digitized voice; and

a table [containing plural] that provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail addresses [against plural proper sender numbers of plural senders] and a plurality of proper sender numbers, respectively,

wherein the identifier performs an identification of the proper sender number based on a memory address within the memory in which the digitized voice is stored.

11. (Amended) A method of processing voice mail comprising the steps of:

identifying a sender of digitized voice upon [taking out] obtaining the digitized voice from a memory, the identifying being performed based on a memory address within the memory in which the digitized voice is stored; and

performing retrieval of a table to find an e-mail address of the sender, based on the sender number.

12. (Amended) A method of processing voice mail comprising the steps of:

identifying a proper number of a sender of digitized voice upon [taking out] obtaining the digitized voice from a memory, the identifying being performed based on a memory address within the memory in which the digitized voice is stored; and

performing retrieval of a table to find an e-mail address corresponding to the proper number.